



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Child support amnesty campaign yields \$60,000 for Arlington children

Richmond – Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Commissioner Anthony Conyers Jr. today announced results of the two-week child support amnesty campaign. Dozens of parents took advantage of the program, paying back child support without fear of prosecution. As a result, \$63,664 was collected for Arlington's children.

During the campaign, the Arlington office of VDSS Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) joined Maryland and Washington, D.C., to target non-custodial parents who are behind in paying child support. DCSE identified approximately 900 Arlington County parents with outstanding warrants issued by the court for non-payment of child support, owing a total of \$17 million. For eligible individuals who chose to comply, pay a lump sum payment and sign a payment plan, DCSE agreed to request that warrants be waived and suspended licenses returned, without fear of disciplinary actions.

More than 12 percent of Arlington's delinquent parents who qualified for amnesty responded to the campaign. More than 7 percent of what was owed by the responding parents was collected. Parents who could not pay in full worked out payment agreements and shared employment information so that their wages could be garnished over time. With these agreements secured during the Amnesty Campaign, it is projected that an additional \$1,630,327 will be collected.

Conyers noted, "The amnesty campaign presented parents with a wonderful opportunity to make good on their responsibility to their children without penalty. The dollars are not the only benefit. Parents who contribute financially are more likely to be involved in their children's lives in other ways, too."

Promise of amnesty can be a powerful incentive. For example, during the campaign, a \$20,000 lump sum payment was made in a case where no payments had been received since 1999. The non-custodial parent also agreed to pay several thousand more in the coming months.

Another case involved an older father who had not worked in several years and had accumulated a considerable child support debt. He has agreed to pay \$65 each month as an act of good faith.

Those who did not choose to avail themselves of amnesty are subject to a wide array of enforcement actions, such as liens, passport denials and withholding of professional licenses.

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DCSE Director Nick Young said, "Providing for our children is serious business and we take the collection of back child support very seriously. Parents who decide that they have priorities other than the welfare of their children may find themselves in a tight place in the weeks to come. We thank those parents who stepped up and did the right thing by acknowledging their responsibility and paying their delinquent child support. "

Another of the latest innovative tools used by DCSE to identify and find child support evaders is through cell phone records. DCSE has issued nearly 1,000 subpoenas to seven cell phone companies attempting to locate additional non-custodial parents who are delinquent in their child support. The child support program is entitled to do so under both federal and Virginia law. To date, DCSE is experiencing a 50 percent success rate in obtaining addresses and cell phone numbers.

For more information on the child support program, visit the VDSS Web site at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov>.

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